



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Ghan launch puts spotlight on the Census

The head of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Statistician, Dennis Trewin and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Clare Martin today launched the NT component of the 2006 Census of Population and Housing at the Ghan Railway Station in Berrimah.

The 2006 Census is one of the biggest peacetime operations in Australia, employing about 30,000 people around Australia, including 1500 across the Northern Territory. Census day is Tuesday 8 August, and Census Collectors will become a familiar sight in urban, rural and remote areas as they deliver and collect forms across the Territory over the coming weeks, beginning last Friday.

The Northern Territory poses special challenges for our Census takers. Many Territorians are on the move due to sporting and cultural events such as the Darwin Cup and Garma Festival. And of course this is the peak tourism season for the Territory. In the last Census, more than 26,000 interstate and overseas visitors were counted in the NT.

All people in the Territory on Census night must complete a Census form. This includes people travelling on transport such as the Ghan and others on overnight journeys by car, bus and plane; those aboard ships in Australian waters like yachts and cruise ships, and those moored in the harbour. From crabbing camps and offshore oil rig workers in the Gulf, to prawn fisherman on trawlers and pearling fleets at sea, to miners in remote communities and workers in distant construction camps, to truck drivers and travellers resting at roadside stops, everyone in the Territory needs to be counted on the night of 8 August.

The Territory's sparsely populated geography (over 1.4 square million kilometres), its ethnic diversity, defence personnel, fly-in fly-out employees and the homeless make an accurate Census count a challenge. So too does the Territory's young and relatively transient population, with the youngest median age in the nation of around 30 years and 26 percent of the population 20-34 years old.

Mr Trewin said the Census is particularly important to the people of the Northern Territory and will enable the Northern Territory Government to provide better services to its people.

"Because the Territory has about 1.5 quotas for electoral seats, relatively minor errors in population estimates can have an impact. Similarly, with the distribution of GST, because the Northern Territory is more dependant on the distribution of GST funds than other states, relatively small errors on population estimates or Indigenous population estimates can have a significant impact on the distribution of funds to the Territory."

He said for these reasons ABS has put additional effort into ensuring a high quality Census count in the Northern Territory.

"A particular focus of our efforts has been Indigenous communities where most questions were asked about the reliability of the 2001 Census counts. We have made a number of important changes to our methods assisted by the advice of a working group set up to help us upgrade our methods. The Northern Territory Government has provided us with experts to improve our knowledge of specific Indigenous communities," Mr Trewin said.

If people have any concerns about the Census, if they fail to receive a form, or need additional forms due to the number of people in their dwelling on Census night, they should call the Census Inquiry Service on 1300 362 883

LOCATION: The Ghan Railway Station TIME: 9:00am, Monday 31 July

FURTHER INFORMATION: Census Inquiry Service - phone 1300 362 883

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